



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### **About...Babesiosis**

##### **What is babesiosis?**

Babesiosis is a disease caused by a parasite, which infects red blood cells. It is transmitted by ticks and occurs in the northeast and upper Midwest states.

##### **How is babesiosis spread?**

The parasites are not passed from person-to-person directly, it occurs through:

- Being bitten by an infected tick (black legged or deer ticks);
- Receiving a blood transfusion from a donor with a 'silent' infection; or
- Sometimes from infected mother to her unborn child.

##### **Who is at risk for babesiosis?**

People who live, travel, or work in areas that with ticks.

##### **How do I know if I have babesiosis?**

See a doctor if you have the signs of babesiosis and have been in tick areas or have recently received a blood transfusion. Your doctor may review your signs, give you an exam, and order lab tests.

##### **What are the symptoms of babesiosis?**

The majority of people who have babesiosis will feel fine and show no symptoms. Some people may develop flu-like symptoms, including:

- Fever
- Chills
- Sweats
- Headache
- Body aches

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Fatigue

Some people may have a type of anemia that can lead to jaundice and dark-colored urine.

Rarely, babesiosis can be a severe, life-threatening disease, particularly in people who:

- do not have a spleen or whose spleen does not have normal function;
- have a weak immune system (such as people with cancer or AIDS);
- have other serious health problems (such as liver or kidney disease); or
- are elderly.

### **How is babesiosis treated?**

A doctor can prescribe medicine that will treat the disease.

### **How is babesiosis prevented?**

Prevent ticks from attaching and feeding by doing the following:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail;
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and over grown grass;
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into socks and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. (It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing);
- Put insect repellent with DEET on cloths, socks, shoes and exposed skin;
- Permethrin (Permanone) can be used on clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin;
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin; and
- After you return from the grassy or wooded area, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits. Take a hot shower and wash clothing in hot water.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/babesiosis/>

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